



## Swachhta Pakhwada: The beginning of a journey

**Dr. Karpaga Priya P<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Ashwini Katole<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Gouri Padhy<sup>3</sup>, Dr. Manisha Ruikar<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Post Graduate Junior Resident, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India

<sup>2</sup> Senior Resident, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India

<sup>3</sup> Additional Professor, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India

<sup>4</sup> Professor and Head, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India

### Abstract

Swachh Bharath Abhiyan a tremendous sanitation program initiated in India became the world's greatest cleanliness drive. A part of this mission is Swachhta Pakhwada, under which many activities are being carried out all over India. Since sanitation and hygiene serves as an important preventive measure for the community health, primary care and well-being, the response would be tremendous if such activities will be conducted by medical and para-medical fraternity who would deliver such messages to them. It would serve as an investment for healthier and prosperous India.

**Keywords:** swachh bhara, swachhta pakhwada, central institute, activities, achievements

### 1. Introduction

Sanitation, clean homes and clean nation are affordable investments to a huge outcome. Though sanitation is everyone's self-responsibility, the benefits are even greater when the country as a whole begins a movement. Such a tremendous effort was initiated in India, the world's greatest cleanliness drive started under the name of Swachh Bharath Abhiyan on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2014 to enable Mahatma Gandhi's vision of Swachh India by 2019 [1]. A part of this mission is Swachhta Pakhwada, which is a fortnight drive conducted at every government office, education institution, hospitals and other such places. All the ministries have been assigned 2 weeks to observe Swachhta twice a year. Swachhta Photo Frames were fixed in all rooms of the government officers, toilets were constructed and cleaned at toll plaza [2]. There has been inspection in prominent places for dustbins and provision of them in such deficient places. By placing banners, running rallies and performing nukkad natak majority of the population were covered [3]. Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology have been involved in cleaning especially divyang toilets [4].

Under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, many government hospitals and central institutes have been actively involved in multitudinal programs for the same. Beginning from cleaning their own campus, conducting health talks about Swachhta, organizing various competitions on theme sanitation (Rangoli, poster, slogan, essay writing, elocution, short films) to create awareness among general public and patient attendees, many such events have been ongoing around different hospitals and teaching institutes [5].

There are various activities conducted by the Department of Community and Family Medicine, AIIMS Raipur over these years during the fortnight observation of Swachhta.

### 2. Activities in AIIMS Raipur campus

In February 2017 initially, health education tools like audiovisual materials were collected from online sources

and merged into a single video to be used in our OPD. On the occasion of Sick Day, health education regarding disposal of plastic wastes, health hazards of them, ill effects of open defecation and importance of hand hygiene was conveyed to the in-patients and their attendants. To motivate the undergraduate students, poster and slogan competition on Swachhta was organized and winners were felicitated by Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The security guards were met and educative talk regarding proper waste disposal and duty to check littering in and around the campus were delivered.

MBBS undergraduate students were sensitized regarding hand hygiene, food hygiene, less use and reuse of polythene bags, segregation of waste (recyclable and biodegradable), reduction in use of plastic, alternatives for plastic, clean and green environment, sources and methods to control air and water pollution. These group interactions were carried out with undergraduates in all swachhta fortnight since beginning. In September 2017, "Swachhta Hi Seva" drive mainly revolved around the construction workers in the campus of AIIMS Raipur. Around 30-40 construction workers were living with their families in the basement parking space. After observing their living standards and cleanliness of their habitat it was decided to improve their conditions and outlook on the same. Concentration was mainly on two aspects: proper waste disposal and prevention of open defecation. By coordinating with the engineering department, dust bins were provided and their timely collection was ensured. It was saddening to see the children defecating in the basement area and made it a breeding place for a hoard of infections. Hence the Administration was requested to provide for mobile / biodegradable toilets within the basement area.

In April 2018, sensitization of BVG workers (house-keeping staff) in Boys, Girls and Nursing Hostel and in College Building of AIIMS Raipur regarding cleanliness in and around their residence was conducted. Also at AIIMS Residential Complex, bananas and buttermilk pouches were

distributed amongst them to make them understand difference between wet and dry solid waste. It was observed that the workers were quite well versed with sanitation and cleanliness. Videos on cleanliness were assembled and shared via social media amongst all students and staff of AIIMS Raipur.

Since behavior change is a critical component in improving sanitation and health education is the first step towards it, April 2019 fortnight began with sanitary education drive from within the hospital campus, covering all the departments and OPDs of the hospital. Also posters were made to create awareness on Swachh Bharat and displayed in the medical college building.

Since sanitation and hygiene is everyone's responsibility, to make sure that the preachers are doers as well, a surprise hostel inspection was conducted to observe the cleanness around the hostel area and the individual room hygiene. The activities were extended to inspection of hygiene and cleanliness at hospital canteens.

In April 2018, for the message to reach the most remote of the populations, the migrant population employed as construction workers in AIIMS campus were visited to assess and sensitize about proper garbage disposal and open air defecation. The dustbins were emptied by BVG workers after the visit. The same site was frequently revisited to ensure timely garbage disposal. In April 2019, they were given health talks on Swachhta and were demonstrated the steps of hand washing. To inculcate and ensure the practice of hand washing, soaps were distributed to them as a token of motivation.

### 3. Activities around AIIMS Raipur campus

In February 2017, an awareness march was carried out around the hospital campus and sabzi market in the evenings, stressing the importance of low density plastic/polythene bags among the vendors and customers. A meeting was conducted with the members of Vegetable Vendor's Association to appeal them to discontinue the use of plastic bags.

Various stakeholders in the hospital area like shopkeepers, food handlers, chefs, school students, vegetable/fruit vendors and waste collectors were sensitized regarding segregation of waste, hand hygiene, food hygiene, and reduction of generation of different types of waste. Special emphasis was given to safe food handling and hygienic disposal of food related waste. One to one interaction and small group interactions were carried out for this purpose.

In April 2018, these areas were surveyed to identify various locations where solid waste was dumped routinely without periodical collection resulting in unhealthy macro environment. A meeting was organized with the Zonal Health Officer in which the problems encountered in various day-to-day activities like ensuring use of green and blue dustbins, periodical collection of solid waste from home as well as public dustbins, segregation of wet and dry waste and their ultimate disposal at sanitary landfill at Sarona in Raipur were discussed at length along with the possible solutions for these problems. Interns showed Zonal Health Officer photos of dumped waste in surveyed areas to enable him to take corrective action.

In the following year, the restaurants, hotels, street vendors, local eat-outs, fast food outlets and other such eateries around AIIMS hospital area were visited for cleanliness check. Almost 15- 20 delicatessens were visited in a day to

observe their food preparatory methods, nattiness of kitchen areas, scullery and waste disposal practices. A few of them maintained good overall hygiene and had adequate knowledge on segregation of wastes. Some of the cuisines avoided the use of plastics and used cloth bags for parceling food items. These restaurants were appreciated for their commendable maintenance. A majority of them had no proper segregation of wastes or cleanliness at the kitchen areas. A few of them had an open drainage running at the back side of the hotel, giving an opportunity for breeding of flies and mosquitoes. The managers of such hotels were explained about the importance of Swachhta and were made aware about their duty to get actively involved in Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

### 4. Activities in and around Urban and Rural Field Practice Area of AIIMS Raipur

In February 2017, streets in Urban Field Practice Area (UHTC) were surveyed and shopkeepers, vendors and residents were sensitized regarding cost effective and environment friendly plastic alternatives. While in April 2018, disposal system in Rural Field Practice Area (RFPA) was surveyed and was observed that biodegradable waste was given to cattle and non-biodegradable waste disposed inappropriately. Residents of surveyed area were sensitized regarding proper waste disposal as well as on open defecation.

In September 2018, under five children at Anganwadi Centre were taught about proper hand washing and importance of using dustbins. In house visits interactive sessions among mothers and other members of families were done on Swachhta. The interactive sessions with mothers were also used to assess use of sanitary pads followed by health education regarding benefits of using sanitary pad with its proper disposal and maintaining menstrual hygiene. The municipality workers & dust collectors were also met and made aware on such topics. The interactive session was also used to assess practice of manual scavenging and was followed by health education. Posters were made and displayed in UHTC for public awareness on Swachh Bharat. Other such IEC materials like banners, placards, slogans, fliers, pamphlets were made on similar topics.

In a country like India where 35% are illiterate, effective communication of a public health issue like sanitation is a big challenge. In order to effectively deliver the message to such a mixed population, in April 2019, a Nukkad Natak in our Urban and Rural Field Practice areas was enacted, (Image1) to reach people from all walks of life. This was an effective way of disseminating the message as the response from population was huge. In all swachhta fortnights, various schools in both Field Practice Areas were visited and health education regarding health hazards of improper environmental and personal hygiene, methods of proper waste disposal, hand hygiene, reduction in use of plastic and alternatives for plastic was imparted. In rural area, the very forum was also used to screen hygiene related diseases like scabies, pediculosis, fungal infections through general health checkup and the students were referred to nearby Rural Health Training Centre of AIIMS Raipur for further management. Education and participation of children in Swachhta Abhiyan appears to be a real long-term investment for healthier and prosperous India.

## 5. Conclusion

By engaging in various Swachhta Pakhwada ventures over the years, the message of Clean Bharat was engraved deep and durable in our minds. The diversified programs under this fortnight celebration might have reached as many people as possible to at least ignite the concept of individual's roles and responsibilities of sanitation and how in order to see a changed world, the change has to begin from one self.

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